

# Newsletter

4 2016

## TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

### **“Come, my beloved ...” – Illustrations for the Song of Songs**

The current exhibition at the Jewish Museum in Prague, organized in cooperation with the Museum of Czech Literature, presents the Song of Songs, shedding light on its origin, place in Jewish liturgy, historical publications, and translations into Czech. However, the primary focus is on the biblical book’s ornamentation, illustrations, and works it has inspired from the early 20th century up to the present day. You can admire Art Nouveau illustrations by artists such as E. M. Lilien, František Kupka and Israeli artist Ze’ev Raban; numerous little-known Art Deco-style illustrations from the early 20th century; later Neoclassical works and a valuable set of illustrated originals from the collections of bibliophile Josef Portman by Czech printmakers; and works by members of a younger generation of artists. Among the works by foreign artists on display are illustrations by Anatoli Kaplan, Shraga Weil, and contemporary American artists Mark Podwal and Barbara Wolff. Interactive screens allow you to view select prints in their entirety. The exhibition, which draws on the collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague and Museum of Czech Literature, is a loose continuation of previous exhibitions on the history of the museum’s book collections (2007) and Pesach Haggadot in the library of the Jewish Museum in Prague (2010). “Come, my beloved” will be open until March 12, 2017.

#### ROBERT GUTTMANN GALLERY

U Staré školy 3, Prague 1

Open daily, except Saturdays and other Jewish holidays 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (summer time) and 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (winter time)



Mark Podwal – Song of Songs (2:2), 2016. © Mark Podwal

### **In memory of the Jews of Semily**

During the Second World War, forty Jews from Semily in northern Bohemia were sent to concentration camps, only six of whom survived. A comprehensive exhibition project was recently put together at the Semily Museum and Gallery to honour the memory of these Jews – just a few of the millions of people who fell victim to Nazi persecution. Organized in co-operation with the Jewish Museum in Prague and the State Regional Archives in Semily, this project included the following exhibitions, which were on view from 7 October until 31 December 2016: *The Jews of the Semily Region*, *A History of the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia*, and *Neighbours Who Disappeared / Tribute to the Child Holocaust Victims*. It began with the unveiling of a plaque in front of the Semily Museum and Gallery to commemorate the Jews of Semily.



### **The legacy of the Jewish past in Dobříš**

In November and December the Dobříš Chateau Gallery hosted our exhibition *Jewish Traditions and Customs*. Another of our exhibitions, *The Second Life of Czech Torah Scrolls*, was on view at the Dobříš House of Culture between November and mid-January.



**CULTURAL EVENTS AND LECTURES IN PRAGUE**

## Cinegogue 2016

CINEGOGUE is a series that combines “cinema” with “synagogue” to screen silent films accompanied by live music in a historic space acclaimed for its architecture. Entitled *The Second Sex: Tilly Losch, Stella Simon, Maya Deren*, Cinegogue 2016 took place on 9-10 October at the Spanish Synagogue in Prague. It turned its attention to Jewish female artists and protagonists who left an indelible mark not only in the realm of experimental cinematography but also in the realms of photography (Stella F. Simon, Maya Deren), dance (Tilly Losch, Maya Deren), and film theory (Maya Deren). In this eighth year of the Cinegogue program we went for the first time beyond 1929, considered the definitive end of the silent era, to present short films that were intentionally shot as silent experiments focused exclusively on cinematic language. All the films were accompanied by new scores specially composed for the program and performed by Berg Orchestra and arranged by its artistic director and conductor Peter Vrábek.



## Forum 2000

On 16 October a discussion entitled “Quo Vadis Central Europe?” was held at the annual Forum 2000 conference, dealing with the topic of the crisis of democracy in Central Europe. The guest speakers were the Israeli historian Shlomo Avineri, the French sociologist Jacques Rupnik and the former Czech ambassador to France, Pavel Fischer. The discussion was moderated by Irena Kalhousová.



### **Two encounters with Karel Poláček**

The Jewish Museum in Prague recently acquired for its collections a set of unique items relating to Karel Poláček and his partner Dora Vaňáková, which was kindly donated by Zuzana Bílková. In connection with this, the Maisel Synagogue hosted two events – entitled “*Two Encounters with Karel Poláček*” – at which a selection of material from this important set of personal papers was presented by Jana Šplíchalová, the curator of the museum’s Holocaust History Archive.

Poláček’s life and work was commemorated on 28 November by Jan Tydlitát and Arnošt Goldflam, the founders of the Poláček Summer Festival in the author’s home town of Rychnov nad Kněžnou. This included a screening of Arnošt Goldflam’s 1983 film *Karel Poláček – A Patriot of Life* and the 1994 film *Karel Poláček’s District Town*, which no doubt pleased many of the visitors.



Arnošt Goldflam and Jan Tydlitát

On 14 December the Jewish Museum in Prague held an event entitled “The Humour and Comedy of Poláček’s Prose”, which was presented by Erik Gilk, a literary historian (University of Olomouc) who has devoted many years to Poláček’s literary work. Its focus was on the specific forms of humour and comedy in Poláček’s novels and to his feuilletons and short pieces of prose, as well as to his thoughts about humour in Czech society and art. Erik Gilk

devoted most attention to Poláček's series of novels about a district town, which may be regarded as the highpoint of his literary work. The event ended with a screening of Dagmar Průchová's 2010 documentary film *Karel Poláček's Hall of Eternity*.

We were delighted by the extent of interest shown in this event, which above all was a tribute to Karel Poláček and also an acknowledgement of thanks to Zuzana Bílková, who donated the material to the museum.



## INVITATION TO THE MAISEL SYNAGOGUE

THU 2 Feb at 7 p.m.: **The Golden Age of Viola da gamba. A concert of Baroque music** by the viola da gamba virtuoso Petr Wagner and theorbo player Přemysl Vacek. Featured composers include Marin Marais, Gottfried Finger, Tobias Hume, Antonie Forqueray, George Philipp Telemann, Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber and Carl Friedrich Abel. Tickets may be purchased in advance at the Maisel Synagogue, the Jewish Museum's Information and Reservation Centre (Maiselova 15, Prague 1), [www.ticketart.cz](http://www.ticketart.cz) and <http://www.jewishmuseum.cz>. Admission CZK 230 / discounted CZK 150.



Přemysl Vacek and Petr Wagner

## VISIT OUR SUNDAY PROGRAMMES FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS

### **8 January: Aryeh the Lion Cub learns the Hebrew alphabet**

Aryeh the Lion Cub learns to write. He writes Hebrew letters with a goose quill. Aryeh's teacher will give you a writing book and a quill and will teach you how to write your name and a brief sentence in Hebrew. What's more, you will find out whether Hebrew numbers differ from letters. This includes a tour of the Maisel Synagogue.

### **12 February: Aryeh the Lion Cub searches for the Golem**

Help Aryeh the Lion Cub create a golem? Listen to stories about the period in which Rudolf II lived and find out about the Jewish scholar who created the Golem. Try to make your own golem and follow his tracks through the Jewish Town. This includes a tour of the Old-New Synagogue.

Start time: 2 p.m. Venue: Jewish Museum of Prague – Department for Education and Culture, Maiselova 15, Prague 1 (ground floor). Price: CZK 50.

## THE BRNO DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE

In November the Brno office of our Department for Education and Culture, in co-operation with the Regional Museum of Mikulov, hosted interactive workshops for pupils and students of schools in Mikulov and the surrounding area. The recently restored rooms of the Mikulov Synagogue, where the workshops took place, provided an inspiration and demonstration of

one of the aspects of Jewish life. Pictured in the photograph are children from an elementary school in Mikulov taking part in the “Researcher” workshop.



On 11 December the Chief Rabbi of the Czech Republic, Karol Efraim Sidon, explained the historical context of the Hanukkah holiday to a packed audience of eager listeners in the Staircase Hall of the Löw-Beer Villa in Brno. The rabbi’s engaging account was followed by a performance by the virtuoso violinist Alexandr Shonert. This event was the culmination of a year-long collaboration between the Brno office of the Jewish Museum’s Department for Education and Culture and the Löw-Beer Villa with focus on Jewish holidays.





## ACQUISITIONS

### **An old book printed by the famous Katz printing house in Prague**

In 2016 the Jewish Museum's Library acquired a very old book of Prague provenance, namely *Moses ben Hayyim Alshekh: Sefer Mar'ot ha-Tsov'ot. Perush al Nevi'im Rishonim. Prag: Moses ben Bezalel Katz, 1620*. This is a commentary on the Former Prophets, the English title being "Collected Visions". Its author, Moses ben Hayyim Alshekh (1508-1593) – known as Alshekh ha-Kadosh (the Holy) – was a prominent rabbi, preacher and biblical commentator. He spent his life in Safed, where he became a student of Joseph Kara. Although he belonged to the circle of the Kabbalists in Safed, his expositions of the Tanakh are mostly of an allegorical, rather than mystical, character.

This book was printed by the famous Katz printing house in Prague. The title page contains a woodcut architectural frame – two columns on the side with floral motifs. In the upper centre is the head of an angel looking down. Underneath there are two angels supporting a coat of arms with two hands raised in blessing (printer's signet). The book's ownership records reflect where it travelled – a hand-written note "Kalonymos bar Jacob Ausch of Prague" (probably from the beginning of the 17th century) and a stamp on the title page "Leib [Monossohn] of St. Petersburg". It is not known how the book made its way from St. Petersburg to New York. Nevertheless, it is now back in Prague, where it originated. It is a valuable addition to our collection of books from Bohemia.



Moses ben Hayyim Alshekh: Mar'ot ha-Tsov'ot. Prag: Moses ben Bezalel Katz, 1620, acc. no. 2016/0866

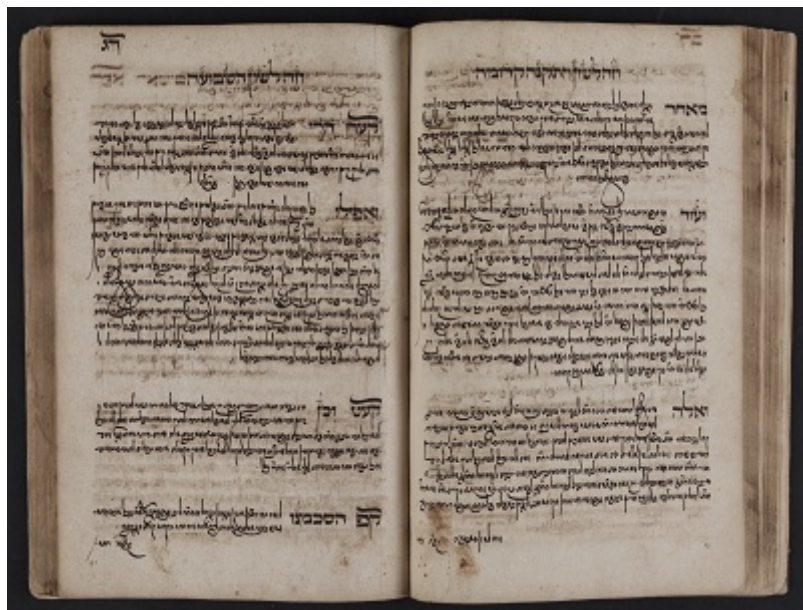
### Manuscript of the Statutes of the Jewish Communities of Moravia, 18th century

The Jewish Museum's most valuable acquisition this year is a manuscript copy of the statutes of the Jewish Communities of Moravia, probably dating from the mid-18th century (Inv. No. 180.269). This manuscript contains the ordinances that were approved and gradually supplemented by the Council of Moravian Jewish Communities during 23 synods that were held between 1650 and 1748. There were originally 311 of these ordinances (Hebrew *takkanot*) – a numerical value expressed by the Hebrew letters *shin*, *yod* and *aleph*, from which the traditional term *Shai Takkanot* is derived.

The manuscript is on hand-made paper with a filigree comprising a five- or six-sided star in a simple circle. It was probably written by a professional scribe. The ownership note in Hebrew on the penultimate page (*This belongs to the Gaon, the President of the Rabbinic Court and the Leader of the Holy Community of Bratislava*) suggests that the manuscript was owned by Moses Schreiber, also known by his main work *Chatam Sofer*, who was one of the greatest Jewish scholars in the 19th century. This assumption is indirectly confirmed by a Hebrew note from 1872 at the beginning of the manuscript, which refers to Rabbi Solomon Sofer, son of Gaon Rabbi Abraham Samuel Benjamin Sofer, of blessed memory, and also by a signature in

Roman characters written by Solomon Schreiber, Rabbi of Beregszász. It is likely that the Rabbi Solomon, a grandson of Chatam Sofer, took the manuscript with him from Bratislava further east to Berehove in Carpathian Ruthenia, from where it travelled via Russia to the USA during a tumultuous 20th century.

This rare manuscript is now closer to the place where it came into being. It is an important addition to the Jewish Museum's collection of Judaica documenting the remarkable life of the Jewish communities of Moravia. The manuscript is also a valuable source for research into the linguistic customs of Moravian Jews, as the text of the ordinance is written in a complicated official style that combines Hebrew and Yiddish in a specific way. Preliminary research into the manuscript has confirmed that the text of this copy differs in part from Israel Halpern's edition of Moravian Takkanot from 1951. In addition, the manuscript is a visually interesting example of the ornate penmanship style of the Moravian Sofrim of the 18th century. It will definitely be placed on display as such.



## PUBLICATIONS

A new issue of the journal **Judaica Bohemiae (Vol. 51/2016, 2)** came out at the end of December 2016. In the opening study, Olga Sixtová presents the results of extensive research into a source that has so far been little used in the specialist literature – the Pinkas of Kolín Synagogue (The Ledger of the Kolín Synagogue Treasurers), which was kept between 1730 and 1783. On the basis of a detailed analysis of its content and language, and through a comparison with other preserved sources, the author provides new and extraordinarily valuable information relating to the organization, administration and economic life of the Kolín Jewish Community, the second largest in Bohemia. The following study is based on detailed research by Magda Veselská and examines how the Prague Jewish Museum's extensive collections were put together during the Second World War, how the Central Jewish Museum operated during the war, and what role was played by Prague Jewish Community employees in connection with its creation. This paper also focuses considerable attention on the important question of how and when the 'museum of an extinct race' slogan first appeared, which to this day is still often regarded as a historical fact.

The present volume also contains reports on the conference 'Remnants of the Past or

Laboratories of Modernity?', which dealt with the issue of Jewish political communities in Moravia after 1848 (3–5 May 2016, Olomouc, I. Koeltzsch – J. Vitámvášová) and on the international workshop 'Suppressed Historiography, Erased Memory?', which explored the perception of the Shoah in Central and Eastern Europe under Communism (30 November –1 December 2015, Halle; M. Sedlická). In addition, Arno Pařík provides information about the exhibition 'The Missing Images: Eugeen Van Mieghem and the Jewish Emigrants to the New World', which was held by the Jewish Museum in Prague and the Eugeen Van Mieghem Museum, Antwerp at the Robert Guttman Gallery between September 2015 and April 2016.

The final section of the volume contains reviews of two books: *Prameny k dějinám Židů v Čechách a na Moravě ve středověku. Od počátků do roku 1347* [Sources on the History of the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia in the Middle Ages – From the Beginnings until 1347], an extensive publication that was published in 2015 by the Institute of History at the Czech Academy of Sciences as part of the Czech Archive series (P. Kocman); and Hannelore Burger's *Heimatrecht und Staatsbürgerschaft österreichischer Juden. Vom Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts bis in die Gegenwart* (Böhlau Verlag 2014, Z. Stoklásková).

Published since 1965 by the Jewish Museum in Prague, *Judaica Bohemiae* focuses on Jewish history and culture in Bohemia, Moravia and the wider Central European area (the territory of the former Habsburg Monarchy). The texts are in English and German.

# JUDAICA BOHEMIAE LI-2



JEWISH MUSEUM IN PRAGUE 2016

# OTHER NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

## Manuscript fragment found

During conservation of Solomon ibn Gabirol's *Mivhar ha-Peninim* (Venice, 1546, acc. no. 2016/0086), a manuscript fragment on parchment was found in the book's covers. After consulting the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes in Paris, we discovered that it is a new fragment of a liturgical legendarium in Old-French, described by Paul Meyer (see Paul Meyer, "Notice sur un légendier français du XIIIe siècle classé selon l'ordre de l'année liturgique", in: *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, 36/1, Paris, 1899). According to the script, it may be dated from the first half of the 14th century. It contains the end of *The Life of Saint Blaise* and a large part of *The Life of Saint Agatha*. The text is written in black-red ink with unusually well-preserved gilding of the initial capital and of the edge of the folio. The subsequent conservation of the manuscript fragment was carried out by the Jewish Museum's paper conservation department. It is being kept together with *Mivhar ha-Peninim* in the collection of rare printed books in our library.



Manuscript fragment discovered during conservation of an old printed book

### **The Jews in Bohemia seminar**

The 6th seminar on the history of the Jews in Bohemia was held on 19 and 20 October. The seminar is held every two years by the Jewish Museum in Prague in co-operation with a regional archive or with another museum. This year's event took place with organizational support from the State Regional Archives in Litoměřice and the Kadaň-based State District Archives in Chomutov. The main focus of the seminar is on the 20th-century history of Jews in the Czech border regions, although the time frame and geographic scope of this topic is being gradually expanded. The historians and archivists who attended the seminar gave 18 papers on the history of Jews in Bohemia from the early modern period through to the post-WW2 years. Publication of the seminar proceedings is planned for the end of 2017.

### **Jewish Museum participation in a conference held by the Art History Institute at the Czech Academy of Sciences**

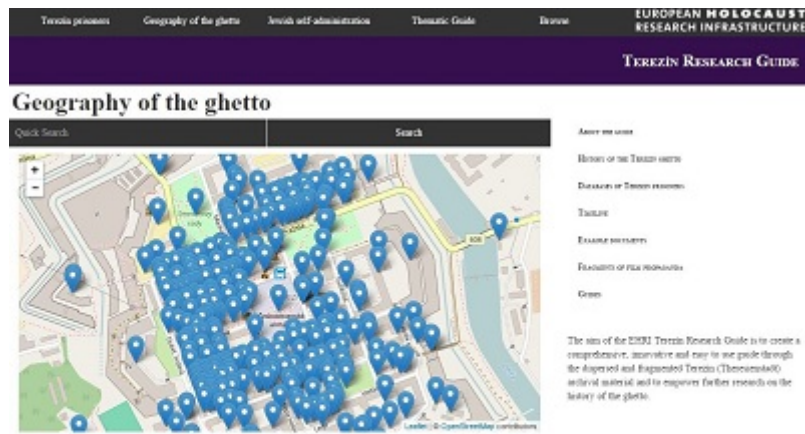
On 19–21 October the Academic Conference Centre of the Art History Institute at the Czech Academy of Sciences hosted the 15th conference on the issue of sepulchral monuments. Jewish Museum staff members gave papers in the section on “Judaica”, which focused on Jewish sepulchral monuments. Historian Daniel Polakovič delivered a presentation on medieval Hebrew inscriptions in the Bohemian lands. Archivist Lucie B. Petrusová focused on the development of Jewish tombstones in the cemetery of the village of Dřevíkov in eastern Bohemia between the 18th and 20th centuries. Art historian Arno Pařík gave a paper on the transformation of tombstone types and decorations in the Old Jewish Cemetery of Prague at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, and later took the conference participants on a tour of the Old Jewish Cemetery.



### **EHRI project and DIGI 2016 conference**

The Jewish Museum in Prague is involved in a number of international research projects. This includes EHRI (European Holocaust Research Infrastructure), which aims to combine and provide access to information about Holocaust-related material that is dispersed across archives in various countries. The EHRI project is an illustrative example of the possibilities that the tools for digital humanities can provide to archivists, researchers and the general public. Magdalena Sedlická (head of the Jewish Museum's Shoah History Department) presented the project's current results at the international conference DIGI 2016 – Digital Technologies and Cultural Heritage, which was held in Prague on 24–25 November.

For more information about the project, see [www.ehri-project.eu](http://www.ehri-project.eu)



One of the results of the EHRI project – Terezín Research Guide

### **Cantors Convention in Prague**

The 11th Cantors Convention was held in Prague on 17–20 November by the European Cantors Association (ECA) in collaboration with the Tel Aviv Cantorial Institute (TACI) and the Society of Jewish Women in the Czech Republic. Among the distinguished guests was the pianist Raymond Goldstein, who is closely associated with the Jerusalem Academy of Music and is the conductor and resident composer-arranger for the Jerusalem Great Synagogue Choir. Another eminent guest was Naftali Herstik, Chief Cantor Emeritus of the Great Synagogue of Jerusalem and Dean of the Tel Aviv Cantorial Institute, which is one of the best cantorial schools in the world.

The highlight of the convention was a gala concert at the Spanish Synagogue, which was attended by more than 200 guests. As part of the event, a Shabbat morning service was held at the synagogue, which was accompanied by a choir of chazanim from across the world. This was truly an exceptional spiritual and musical experience.



### **Birthday greetings**

Helena Votočková, a textile conservator at the Jewish Museum in Prague, celebrated a milestone birthday at the end of October 2016 and was congratulated by the museum director and colleagues. Having joined the textile conservation workshop of what was then the State Jewish Museum in Prague in 1971, Ms. Votočková is our longest-serving employee.



Textile conservator Helena Votočková